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SUBJECT: ISRAELI REASSURANCES ON NONPROLIFERATION SECTION
OF THE EU-ISRAEL ACTION PLAN

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer Reasons: 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: Israeli officials told the Ambassador on December 22 that the nonproliferation section of the EU-Israel plan of action under the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) contained "absolutely nothing new." They described the plan as another attempt by the EU to lock Israel into a process and undermine other fora such as the Arms Control and Regional Security group. Israel had agreed to the text because of beneficial provisions elsewhere in the plan (e.g., economic cooperation and combating anti-Semitism). Israeli officials said they would resist changes to their nonproliferation policy, even if this stance results in delays to the ENP process. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) During a meeting on December 22, Israel Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) Director General Gideon Frank, his Principal Deputy for Policy Eli Levite, and Director for Arms Control Merav Zafary briefed the Ambassador and poloffs on the nonproliferation section of the EU-Israel action plan. They also discussed Iran and the upcoming IAEA forum on experience with nuclear-weapon-free zones (septels).

3. (C) Levite said that the Israeli cabinet had recently discussed the nonproliferation section of the text of the joint EU-Israel plan of action under the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). PM Sharon had explicitly asked the IAEC to inform the USG that there is "absolutely nothing new" in Israel's arms control policy, despite what some EU members may say. In Levite's analysis, the EU is trying to lock Israel into "some sort of process" on arms control. He said Israel's clear preference is to work these issues with the USG or on its own.

4. (C) The Ambassador asked if the EU shared Israel's interpretation of the action plan. Frank replied, "some of them do." He noted that the chapeau of the nonproliferation section (text available under <http://europa.eu.int>) clearly states that the two sides will develop their dialogue in the context of both EU strategy and "Israel's vision of the long-term goals of regional security and arms control process in the Middle East."

5. (C) Levite speculated that the Europeans are looking for creative ways to revive the Barcelona process. He said the EU also intends to supersede the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) process -- something Israel would not allow. Nevertheless, FM Shalom had told the cabinet that the action plan contained many points that would benefit Israel, so the government had approved the text.

6. (C) The Ambassador asked if possible differing interpretations of the nonproliferation section could eventually cause difficulties for Israel in the ENP process. Levite said it would be a "political judgment" by the EU on whether the action plan commits Israel to certain steps. His view was that the plan contained enough scope for progress in other areas that the two sides could move forward. He noted, however, that Israel would not take nonproliferation steps that were against its own interests, even if this stance results in delays to the ENP process.

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